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International arrangements and mechanisms to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests (programme element III)

Draft proposal submitted by the Co-Chairman

International arrangement on forests

I. Objectives and functions

1. The main objectives of the future international arrangement on forests is to secure long-term political commitment to promote and implement internationally agreed action programmes on forests, at the national, regional and global levels, and to foster further commitment and action by all actors to achieve sustainable management of all types of forests. The implementation of these action programmes should take fully into account the provisions of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,[1] the non-legally binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests[2] (Forest Principles) and the outcome of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF)/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) process, and should be consistent with, and complementary to, the existing international legally binding instruments relevant to forests. To achieve these objectives, the proposed arrangement on forests is designed to perform the following principal functions:

(a) To promote and increase the efficiency of programme delivery through enhanced policy and programme coordination among the main actors involved in sustainable management of all types of forests;

(b) To monitor progress and enhance implementation of existing international commitments and agreements related to forests at the national, regional and global levels in close cooperation with relevant treaty bodies and their secretariats;

(c) To provide for a high-level authoritative and participatory forum for continued dialogue and further policy development involving Governments, international organizations and other stakeholders, including the private sector, to address cross-sectoral forest issues in a holistic, comprehensive and integrated manner; and also identify and address emerging areas of concern;

(d) To build further consensus on seeking strong political commitment towards an international legally binding instrument, or any other arrangements, that may foster progress, in the context of evolving

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needs and circumstances as well as of an assessment of overall progress achieved.

II. Structure

2. An effective international arrangement on forests should be established immediately in order to facilitate the achievement of the objectives, through the principal functions outlined above. High priority should be placed on the implementation of already agreed provisions, legally binding or otherwise, while also providing an opportunity for further policy development and consensus-building. The arrangement to be established may operate along the following lines.

Main mechanisms for policy development, policy coordination and policy implementation

(a) A permanent intergovernmental body of the United Nations (tentatively called "United Nations Forest Council") to:

- Build further consensus and provide policy guidance to all key actors;
- Promote effective policy coordination;
- Determine priorities for action;
- Foster a dialogue to promote policy development;
- Monitor progress;
- Serve as a reference on forests to other organizations and instruments;
- Identify and deliberate emerging areas of priority concern.

(b) A programmatic cooperative partnership (tentatively called "United Nations Partnership on Forests" (UNPF)) among the main international and regional institutions, dealing with the implementation of sustainable forest management. UNPF would be open to all international and regional organizations and financial institutions that have the mandate and capacity to implement activities to promote sustainable forest management through financing, research, technical cooperation and advisory services.

Supporting mechanisms

(c) An arrangement, involving participants in the UNPF, organized along the lines of the informal high-level Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests (ITFF), which would act as a "steering committee" in order to :

- Coordinate action among the institutions concerned;
- Promote joint programming;
- Submit coordinated programmatic and budgetary proposals to their respective governing bodies, as well as to donors, and foundations;
- Prepare coordinated inputs to the intergovernmental body referred to in (a) above.

(d) A compact secretariat, comprising, *inter alia*, secondments from interested institutions and agencies, to provide support to (a), (b) and (c) above.

The details of these arrangements are described below.

Intergovernmental body (suggested title: United Nations Council on Forests)

3. The Council could be established under the aegis of the Commission on Sustainable Development or the General Assembly (pros and cons to be further evaluated by IFF). The Council would normally meet once in two years for a period of up to two weeks. The Council session would include a high-level ministerial segment which could agree on a multi-year thematic programme of work for the next four years. Furthermore, the ministerial meeting of the Council could monitor overall progress, consider emerging issues and additional requirements and identify appropriate responses.

4. The sessions of the Council would focus on monitoring progress towards sustainable forest management, updating the programme of work, as required, and provide a forum for fostering further action on the basis of policy dialogue and consensus building. The first meeting of the Council could be held (to be discussed by IFF).

5. The areas of priority concern, based on the Forest Principles and chapter 11 of Agenda 21,[3] as well as the IPF/IFF process, as identified in the Secretary-

General's report (E/CN.17/IFF/2000/4), together with criteria for sustainable forest management, would form the substantive conceptual basis for the multi-year thematic programme of work.

6. The programme of work should be practical and concise and aim to identify a discrete number of areas of priority concern. Such a programme of work could engage organizations involved in UNPF, to fulfil the objectives of the arrangement on forests and to support relevant action at the national, regional and global levels.

7. In conducting its business, the Council would primarily draw on the resources and technical expertise of relevant international organizations within and outside the United Nations system, and secretariats of relevant conventions, as well as inputs from major groups, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

8. As the need may arise, the Council may recommend the establishment of subsidiary bodies for scientific, technical and expert advice to assist policy deliberations by the Council, according to the multi-year programme of work.

Programmatic partnership among existing institutions (UNPF)

9. The programmatic partnership should mobilize the capacities of international and regional institutions involved in forest-related work, as well as existing international legal instruments, with a view to implementing internationally agreed programmes related to sustainable management of all types of forests.

10. The partnership could initially involve international organizations, participating in ITFF, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the Convention on Biological Diversity[4] secretariat and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and would be open to participation of other relevant multilateral organizations, convention secretariats and multilateral financial institutions that have a mandate and capacity to implement forest-related activities.

11. The partnership would promote cross-sectoral and pragmatic actions among all actors engaged in forest-related areas of priority concern at the national, regional and global levels.

"The steering committee"

12. A steering committee of UNPF could be established with the involvement of the informal high-level ITFF, other interested international institutions, secretariats of relevant legal instruments and multilateral donor organizations. Its functions would aim to:

(a) Enhance coordination of action, capacity-building at the national level and more effective donor coordination, as appropriate, for the implementation of relevant programmes of actions, taking due account of priorities determined by the Council for the four-year thematic programme of work;

(b) Facilitate joint programmes among institutions involved, with a view to achieving synergies, avoiding duplication and enhancing programme delivery, as well as identifying potential funding sources and other possible financial arrangements;

(c) Preparing coordinated programmatic and budgetary proposals to be submitted to their respective governing bodies with a view to securing an allocation of funds for the concerted implementation of the multi-year programme of work emanating from the Council;

(d) Coordinating and facilitating the preparation of reports and other analytical inputs to the Council in support of its monitoring and policy development functions.

Secretariat support structure

13. A secretariat based on arrangements established in support of IPF and IFF processes and comprising a small core group funded from the United Nations regular budget and strengthened through secondments from interested institutions and agencies should be established to support the work described above.

14. The secretariat would transmit tasks from the Council to appropriate organizations, develop and maintain an effective communication and coordination system between the Council and the steering committee as well as with other relevant mechanisms, expert groups, organizations, and initiatives, as well as major groups, and undertake the provision of logistic support to the Council's meetings. It would also disseminate information and carry out relevant public outreach activities.

Financial support

15. The arrangement referred to above would, to the largest extent possible, build upon the work undertaken and resources already available in existing institutions and organizations involved in forest-related activities. However, its functioning, in particular the work of the Council and secretariat, would require funding from regular budgets of the United Nations and, as appropriate, of organizations of the United Nations system. To the extent possible, such funding should be mobilized through reallocation of resources from the regular budget of the United Nations and, as appropriate, from resources of organizations involved in UNPF. It should also be supported through additional pledged contributions from Governments and other donors, as well as in-kind contributions and secondments from interested countries and organizations.

Notes

[1] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex I.

[2] Ibid., annex III.

[3] Ibid., annex II.

[4] See United Nations Environment Programme, *Convention on Biological Diversity* (Environmental Law and Institution Programme Activity Centre), June 1992.